

AWFUL CHANGES.

MAN FOUND ONLY IN A FOSSIL STATE—REAPPEARANCE OF ICHTHYOSAURUS.



"*A Lecture.*—" You will at once perceive," continued Professor ICHTHYOSAURUS, "that the skull before us belonged to some of the lower order of animals; the teeth are very insignificant, the power of the jaws trifling, and altogether it seems wonderful how the creature could have procured food."

CURIOSITIES OF NATURAL HISTORY.

BY

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AND MINERALOGY.

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In Memory of

T H E F A T H E R,

TO WHOSE EXAMPLE AND INSTRUCTION

I OWE

THAT TASTE FOR NATURAL HISTORY

WHICH HAS FURNISHED ME WITH AGREEABLE OCCUPATION

DURING THE

LEISURE HOURS OF MY PROFESSION.

PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION.

No less than four thousand five hundred copies of this work having been sold since its first publication, I am induced to issue another Edition.

As it is difficult to alter stereotyped plates, I have added, in the form of an Appendix, some notes and letters from correspondents relative to matters mentioned in my pages as first issued. I here beg to thank those who have kindly written to me for their permission to publish their observations. Several passages will be found from "The Naturalist" columns of "The Field" newspaper, which the Editor has kindly allowed me to reprint.

I have also made an Index to facilitate reference to whatever the reader may wish to look at a second time.

The longevity of this collection of notes on Natural History cannot but be gratifying to all concerned in its welfare; and my Publisher holds out hopes that it will for some time continue to occupy a place among the popular literature of the day.

FRANCIS T. BUCKLAND.

*Knightsbridge Barracks,
London, S.W.
Sept. 15, 1860.*

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

THE demand for this little book has induced me, at my Publisher's request, to issue a Fourth Edition. I myself should hardly have thought it worthy of the honour ; the Public are the best judges. To them, to the Reviewers, who have so favourably noticed its contents, and to the many kind persons who have sent me communications on matters treated in its pages, I cannot be sufficiently grateful. And with best thanks,

Beg to subscribe myself,

Theirs most obliged,

THE AUTHOR.

Cavalry Barracks, Windsor,
December 1, 1858.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE Preface is generally the last portion of a book which is written, and on this account it ought to be read first. I would beg of those into whose hands this book should come, to reverse the usual order of things, and to read the Preface before they dip into the contents. They will then know why it was written.

For many years I had the great privilege of being much in the company of my lamented father, the Very Rev. William Buckland, D.D., &c., &c., Dean of Westminster. I never missed one course of his lectures during the time I was at Oxford, and he hardly ever went out on any geological or other expedition without taking me with him.

Always a diligent note-taker himself, he encouraged me in putting down every fact with which I was previously unacquainted, and in this way I accumulated much information, both from him and from other sources.

These notes during the last five years I have occasionally put together, and published in 'Bentley's Miscellany,' and in a rising little periodical, 'The St. James's Medley.' I have now collected, and have at the same time added very considerably to them.

I heard, not long ago, of a preparer of microscopic objects, who complained that 'he had exhausted the animal kingdom.' I am well aware that many books have been written on natural history, but still am of

opinion that the animal kingdom is not yet ‘exhausted,’ and with this belief, I have written the following pages.

In natural history, as well as in other researches, it is too much the practice to copy facts and observations from printed books, the great volume of Nature herself being left unopened. It has been my endeavour to search into this book, and to record facts which came under my own eyes. I have, nevertheless, not hesitated to use the eyes of other naturalists, at times and places when it was impossible to use my own. I have plainly marked as quotations all matter which belongs to other persons: should any one recognize any passage unacknowledged, he is requested to regard it as an oversight.

In the article on Rats will be observed several references to a paper which appeared on the same subject in the Quarterly Review, January 1857. I have thought it right to draw attention to these, that I might not be thought guilty of plagiarism. The article on Rats was published by me in Bentley’s Miscellany, August 1852.

Without the knowledge of the structure and physiology of the lower members of the animal kingdom, it would be difficult rightly to understand many functions of the human economy; and much light has been thrown upon the art of healing by the study of the lower links of the chain of animal life.

I would wish it, therefore, to be understood, that the following pages have not been written to the neglect of purely professional subjects of investigation. It has been acknowledged by many of our greatest medical men, that Natural History is the handmaid to the study of medicine and surgery; and this is amply proved by the collection made by John Hunter, the immortal founder of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons. This great man points out to his followers the necessity of studying comparative as well as human

anatomy ; for he has begun his series with the lowest form of animal life, ending with man himself.

My sincere thanks are due to the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons, London, for their kindness in allowing me to have drawings made of specimens contained in their noble Museum ; a vast store-house of facts, the treasures of which can only be appreciated by those who examine for themselves. To my friend Mr. Quekett, Curator of the Museum, I am under great obligations, not only for his kindness in giving me every facility of access to those specimens I wished to examine, but also for much information relative to the subjects under my investigation.

The drawings are by the anastatic process, but have not come out so clearly as I could have wished. The frontispiece, (photographed on wood from the original) Plate I., is a reduction of a drawing made many years ago for Dr. Buckland by the late lamented Sir Henry de la Beche. After my father's death, I found that a few copies only remained, and the plate could not be found. Unwilling, therefore, that it should be entirely lost, and at the same time having every reason to believe that it had never yet been published, I determined to endeavour to resuscitate it as worthy of the brilliant imagination of one of Dr. Buckland's most intimate friends. It was originally, drawn as a sort of quiz upon his geological lectures at Oxford, when he was treating upon Ichthyosauri, a race of extinct fish-like lizards. The subject of the drawing may be thus described—Times are supposed to be changed. Man is found only in a fossil state, in the same condition as the ichthyosauri are discovered at the present epoch ; and instead of Professor Buckland giving a lecture upon the head of an ichthyosaurus, *Professor Ichthyosaurus* is delivering a lecture on the head of a fossil man. Around the Professor, whose jaws and teeth are monstrous as compared with those

in a human subject, is gathered a class of attentive listeners of the same race as himself, all anxious to learn the history of the creature to whom the curious and, in comparison to their own, diminutive skull belonged. Professor Ichthyosaurus is made thus to address his audience—‘ You will at once perceive that the skull before us belonged to some of the lower order of animals—the teeth are very insignificant, the power of the jaws trifling ; and altogether it seems curious how the creature could have procured food.’

In the following pages no attempt is made at fine writing, and the matter is put down much in the order that it occurred to me.* I trust it may afford some amusement, perhaps instruction, to those who take an interest in the curiosities of Natural History.

F. T. BUCKLAND,

2nd Life Guards, Knightsbridge Barracks.

Nov. 30, 1857.
Athenæum Club, Pall Mall.

* The above statement is fully borne out by the ‘ Saturday Review,’ who in mentioning the book says, ‘ Mr. Buckland’s book reads like the contents of a note-book, thrown out pell-mell.’ Its aim is rather, again to quote the same journal—‘ *amusement and profit*,’ than literary excellence.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

IN issuing a second edition of this collection of notes on Natural History, I have to express my grateful acknowledgments, both to the public and the press, for the favourable manner in which they have received and spoken of my endeavours to promote the observation of facts which we see in daily operation among the various members of the living animal world around us. It is by observation alone that we can arrive at truth; and great truths are ascertained only by a combination of numerous recorded facts.

Again, or for the second time, I make my bow; trusting to my readers to pardon all the imperfections, which still, after a careful revision, I fear, have escaped my notice.

F. T. BUCKLAND,
2nd Life Guards, Knightsbridge Barracks.

March 1, 1858.
Athenæum Club, Pall Mall.

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CURIOSITIES OF NATURAL HISTORY.

A HUNT IN A HORSE-POND.

PRAY what is there to be found in a horse-pond except mud, dead dogs and cats, and duck-weed? the reader may ask.—Pray what is to be found in that trumpery ball they call the earth? the ‘Man in the Moon’ may demand of his neighbour Saturn as they both come out for their evening stroll. The answer to such questions is, simply, ‘*Life*;’ Life in all diversity of form, beautifully and wonderfully arranged, each individual deriving benefit from the well-being of the mass; the mass itself prospering in ratio with the individual.

To the inhabitants of the pond, the pond is the world; to the inhabitants of the world, the world, as compared to space, is but a pond; and when the adventurous lizard has made a voyage of discovery round his pond, he has as much right, comparatively speaking, to boast of his performance to his fellow-lizards, as Captain Cook

had, when he first sailed round the world, to write two thick volumes for the information of his fellow-men. Well, let us have a look at the pond-world ; choose a dry place at the side, and fix our eyes steadily upon the dirty water : what shall we see ? Nothing at first ; but wait a minute or two ; a little round black nob appears in the middle ; gradually it rises higher and higher, till at last you can make out a frog's head, with his great eyes staring hard at you, like the eyes of the frog in the woodcut facing *Æsop's fable of the frog and the bull* ; not a bit of his body do you see, he is much too cunning for that, he does not know who or what you are ; you may be a heron, his mortal enemy, for aught he knows. You move your arm, he thinks it is the heron's bill coming ; down he goes again, and you see him not ; a few seconds, he regains courage and reappears, having probably communicated the intelligence to the other frogs ; for many big heads and many big eyes appear, in all parts of the pond, looking like so many Hippopotami on a small scale. Soon a conversational 'Wurk, wurk, wurk,' begins ; you don't understand it ; luckily perhaps, as from the swelling in their throats it is evident that the colony is outraged by the intrusion, and the remarks passing are not complimentary to the intruder.

These frogs are all respectable, grown-up, well-to-do frogs, and they have in this pond duly deposited their spawn, and then, hard-hearted creatures ! left it to its fate ; it has, however, taken care of itself, and is now hatched, at least that part of it which has escaped the hands of the gipsies, who not unfrequently prescribe baths of this natural jelly for rheumatism.

In the shallow water close by, is a dark black spot,

that looks like a bit of old hat thrown away to rot.* Touch it with the end of a stick—the mass immediately becomes alive. Presto ! thousands of little black long-tailed rascals seem immediately to start into life : these are embryo frogs, alias tadpoles, alias porwiggles, alias loggerheads, alias toe-biters. This last significant title has been given them by the amphibious boys of Clapham Common, whose toes they bite, when fishing about for fresh-water curiosities in the numerous ponds of that district. These little creatures are evidently selfish like other animals in the creation, for they are pushing, squeezing, and hustling each other, like people going to hear Jenny Lind. And pray what are they all so anxious to get at?—simply a dead kitten. And why should they not fight for good places ? The dead kitten is to them what a turtle dinner is to the City folks ; each duly appreciated by the rightful consumers.

But supposing there happens to be no dead kitten or decayed vegetable matter in their pond, what will the poor things get to eat ? Why then they will do what the New Zealanders have done before them ; they, the New Zealanders, ate up every specimen of the Dinornis they could find on their island, and then they set to work and ate up each other ; so do the tadpoles. You ask a proof: last year, I went, with a tin quart-pot in my hand, toe-biter hunting, on Clapham Com-

* Some ^{*}beavers were one day building their dam across a river, when an old hat came floating down the stream and lodged against their dam ; the beavers collected round it and examined it; at last one of them applied his nose to it and exclaimed ‘Alas ! our grandfather’! This happened in the days when beavers were killed and their skins made into hats. The grandfather had returned to his colony in the form of a hat.

mon, and brought home exactly a quart of tadpoles; these I emptied into a tub in the beer-cellar; there they lived, being fed on meat several days, till one evening, on sending for a glass of the all-refreshing fluid, up comes John with half a smile on his face, and simpers out, ‘If you please, sir, I have brought the beer, but I have upset the tadpoles.’ On arriving at the scene of the disaster, there were the poor things high and dry on the floor. I restored them to their tub, but forgot to put back their meat. The next morning, I found some had not recovered their accident, and round the bodies of their departed brethren, were crowded the cannibal survivors, eating and pulling away, each for himself. After this, I left them much to themselves, and their numbers diminished considerably; the cook’s opinion being, as usual, that that omnivorous creature, ‘*the cat*,’ had a hand in it; bringing forward as an argument, which is not strictly zoological, as applied to tadpoles, that the ‘cat is fond of fish.’

By the discovery of skeletons, murders are often brought to light; so it was in the case of Tadpole *v.* Cat; the skeletons of the murdered froglings I found in abundance at the bottom of their tub: and wonderful skeletons they were, the form of the little creatures being beautifully shown in a framework of delicate gristle, the various parts still united together, but separating on the slightest touch. I have sometimes seen capital skeletons of small animals in ponds, the flesh having been eaten away by tadpoles. In the United Service Museum are some very perfect skeletons of sea-birds made somewhat in the same way; they were brought home from the Arctic regions, and were made by the sea-lice: the birds were let down into